

Achieving an Equally Gendered Government: The Economic Impact of Women's Political Participation in Tennessee

When Women are at the Table, the Conversation Changes



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October 2007

Greetings:

Throughout history, Tennessee has played a vital role in the course of our Nation's political climate. Three Presidents, Jackson, Johnson and Polk, were from Tennessee and two Tennesseans served as Vice-President. Sixty-seven people have represented Tennessee in the U.S. Senate. None of these have been women.

In 1920, a young State Representative from McMinn County, Harry Burn, made Tennessee the thirty-sixth state to ratify the 19th Amendment, giving all women the right to vote. Today, Tennessee ranks 49th nationally in women's political participation.

Political participation is an economic issue. In those states where women participate fully in the political process – by registering, voting, campaigning and holding office – their economic status is stronger. Women should be encouraged to make their voices heard on policies relating to everything from education to business tax. Women bring a unique perspective, different skills and energizing creativity to governing. Let's face it, when women are at the table, the conversation changes.

Sincere thanks goes to all of those people who have assisted in preparing this research. We have received tremendous support from across the State in this research and so many people have shared their experiences and views with us about the need for women in politics.

The good news is that, however, slowly, changes are being made. We applaud the wonderful women of Tennessee who are leading the way by running for office, serving in elected and appointed positions and sharing their knowledge with those who will follow them. Tennessee's women continue to make great contributions to our State and Nation and the Council fully believes this is a trend that will, and must, continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol Berz".

Carol Berz
Chairwomen

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennifer Rawls".

Jennifer Rawls
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Powers".

Jane Powers
Political Participation Committee

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About The Economic Council On Women

Mission Statement

The mission of the Tennessee Economic Council on Women is to address the issues that impact the economic self-sufficiency of Tennessee's women. In order to meet this mandate, the Council conducts research, holds hearings, publishes studies, educates the public and develops policy recommendations for governmental consideration.

Who We Are:

The Tennessee Economic Council on Women is a state agency with 21 appointed members and an Executive Director. The Governor appoints six (6) members. The Speakers of the House of Representatives and the Senate jointly appoint nine (9) representatives of the State's Development Districts. The Speaker of the Senate appoints two (2) Senators and the Speaker of the House appoints two (2) Representatives. The Tennessee black caucus of state legislators and the legislative women's caucus make one appointment each.

What We Are About:

The One Hundredth General Assembly created the Tennessee Economic Council on Women (TCA § 4-5-101, et seq.) to address the economic concerns and needs of women in Tennessee. These concerns and needs include, but are not limited to, employment policies and practices, educational needs and opportunities, child care, property rights, health care, domestic relations and the effect of federal and state laws on women. The Council conducts research, holds hearings, develops recommendations and policy, educates the public, and engages in activities for the benefit of women. It is authorized to request funds from the federal government and private sources. The Council consults with and reports to the Governor, the Women's Legislative Caucus, the General Assembly and the pertinent agencies, departments, boards, commissions and other entities of State and local governments on matters pertaining to women.

Our Goal:

The Tennessee Economic Council on Women will be the source for information impacting the economic health of Tennessee's women.

THE TENNESSEE ECONOMIC COUNCIL ON WOMEN
2007-2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite its historical responsibility for ratifying the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, Tennessee has a national composite political participation ranking of 49th (of 51, including the district of Columbia) relative to women.

Although Tennessee women register and vote at higher rates than men, women remain under-represented in elected state and federal government offices. In the state's history, there has never been a female governor or senator and three of the five female U.S. Representatives were elected under special circumstances resulting from the death of their husbands. There are no county governments in Tennessee with an equal number of men and women serving in political office.

Do Women in Local, State and National Legislative Bodies Matter? Three Decades of Research Indicate a Resounding YES

Findings

- Women conceptualize problems differently and are more likely to offer new solutions.
- Non-feminist women are more likely than non-feminist male colleagues to work on legislation affecting women.
- Women legislators of both parties are more likely to advance “women’s issues,” define women’s issues more broadly than men, put them at the top of their legislative agendas, and to take a leadership role in those issue areas. This results in bills dealing with children, education, and health care becoming legislative priorities.
- Women are more likely to view crime as a societal, rather than individual, problem.
- Women legislators are more likely to make certain that their policy positions are translated into new programs to help women.
- Women legislators receive more constituent casework requests than their male colleagues and are three times more likely to agree that they would do more if they had more staff.
- Women not only are more responsive to constituent requests, they are more likely to be persistent in their follow through to get a favorable resolution for their constituents
- Women legislators believe that they need to help other women transcend barriers to success.
- Women view themselves as more prepared, more diligent, and more organized.
- Women emphasize a “hands on” approach emphasizing collegiality and collaboration instead of a hierarchical “command” approach.
- Women rely on a wider range of individuals in formulating policy creating more sensitive and thoughtful policy making.

- Women who meet as a caucus are more likely to work on bills dealing with women's rights.
- First term women sponsor less legislation than their male counterparts, while more senior women offer more than their male counterparts.
- Women committee chairs use their positions to facilitate interaction among committee members rather than to control and direct the debate. This affects the behavior of witnesses and other committee members.
- In general, women-sponsored legislation has a slightly higher rate of passage. Particularly, women's priority bills on women's issues become law at a higher pass rate than men's.
- When women are less than fifteen percent of the legislative body, their status constrains their behavior.
- States with the lowest percentage of women in their legislatures pass the lowest number of women's bills. Men believe that women in the legislative body help sensitize them to women's issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In 1996 Tennessee was ranked 39th nationally for number of female legislative representatives. Tennessee dropped to 43rd nationally. On the aggregate level, women's presence in the legislatures and other state-level elected offices seems closely associated with better policy for women. It follows, then, that for women in both parties, an increase in the number of female representatives at all levels of government would be a push for women-friendly legislation across the board. Further, in states where women's political status is strong, their economic status is as strong as well. Tennessee, unfortunately, follows this pattern – conversely - in that there is both weak political and economic status for women.

Women in Tennessee are neither receiving - nor advocating for - their equitable political representation at the local, state, or national level. Parity at the national level depends on equality at the state level and equality at the state level depends on equality at the local level. For improvements to reach the top, they must begin at the bottom. It is the responsibility of the government who, by neglect, has promoted historic unequal participation, to affirmatively repair its mistakes. However women also must take the initiative and an active role in increasing their own participation in government. With government's help, and with the collective will and actions of women, improvements can be made. The following recommendations are offered for the reader's consideration:

1. GOVERNMENT POLICY SHOULD:

- ***Encourage equal participation at all levels of education.*** Girls should not be programmed into traditional female studies that lead to low-paid occupations. Rather they should be given more opportunities to pursue careers which lead to political office, for example economics, law and political science.

- ***Discourage sex-role stereotyping.*** Government should promote changes in the way women are treated in textbooks, movies and television. Women should not only be portrayed as housewives, mothers, teachers or nurses, but also as successful business professionals with high income levels.
- ***Change the demographics of upper-level state political participation to reflect equity.*** The government should pursue a policy of increased appointment of qualified women to cabinets, boards and judicial posts.
- ***Fund and support high level and grassroots women's groups who work for the economic interests of women.*** This policy, in turn, will aid to ameliorate the economic challenges to the state budget.
- ***Provide grants*** or other funding to sponsor bi-partisan partnerships to research and report on women's issues, including the effect of legislation.

2. **WOMEN SHOULD:**

- ***Obtain better education and job training*** that provides more direct routes to political involvement.
- ***Build networks*** that increase access to information and reduce isolation.
- ***Work to improve the image of women*** by monitoring textbooks and media portrayals.
- ***Register to vote – and regularly vote*** for the candidates and issues of their choice.
- ***Form women's groups*** for lobbying activities, skills development and support of candidates. (See Appendix 2 for a case example.)
- ***Work within political party structures*** to support women candidates and men who are sensitive to women's concerns.
- ***Develop fundraising skills and their own resource base*** with which to support their candidates.
- ***Develop mentor relationships*** with those holding positions of influence in parties or governments.
- ***Believe in their ability to be a successful public servant.***

With the combination of government and women working together to promote equal political opportunity for women, improvement is inevitable. Unfortunately, this union has yet to form in affirmative fashion. It is for the benefit of the country as a whole for local and state governments to begin pushing for such actions so that women can move up the “pipeline” – not only to represent their constituencies but also to become an active part of the policy promulgation that engenders their own economic health.

Women make up more than one-half of the population, more than one-half the students in Tennessee universities and colleges and less than one-third of Tennessee government representatives. In order to continue the economic growth of Tennessee, these numbers must change.

ACHIEVING AN EQUALLY GENDERED GOVERNMENT: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TENNESSEE

I. Introduction

This paper explores: (1) The level, in general, of women's participation in the political process; (2) In specific, the level of Tennessee women's political participation; (3) The factors that may impact that participation; and finally (4) Ways in which the political participation of Tennessee's women can be enhanced.

Rationale

Women's political participation matters. In 2000, an Inter-Parliamentary Union poll of 187 female politicians in sixty-five countries found that eighty percent of the respondents believe that increased representation of women renews public trust in government which, in turn, helps economic welfare. The politicians cited examples from countries as diverse as El Salvador, Ethiopia, New Zealand and Russia, in which political activism by women led to 'tangible improvements' in social services, the environment, the safety of women and children, and gender equality.¹

A diverse public sector is important not only for symbolic reasons, but because governmental decisions are expected to be more responsive to the public when its workforce 'looks like America.'² Women make up the majority of the American voting population, and utilizing them in the political system brings "different attitudes, priorities, and perspectives" to the legislature.³ Julie Dolan, a political science professor at Macalester College, explains that "legislative scholars have repeatedly shown [that] female politicians bring different perspectives to government, often being more attuned than men to policy problems and issues that concern women."⁴ Moreover, Dolan continues, "surveys of presidential and gubernatorial appointees indicate that female Republican and Democratic appointees are more supportive of childcare, abortion rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment than their male colleagues. Thus, the existing attitudinal evidence suggests that female appointees, as a group, respond to the distinct concerns and preferences of the female citizenry."⁵

National studies, specifically those sponsored by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), suggest that, at the state level, women's representation in government increases the likelihood of the passage of women-friendly legislation that positively impacts women, including the promotion of wage equity, workplace and neighborhood safety and education geared to the enhancement of women's physical, mental and reproductive health.

The impact of women's political involvement both at the voting level and level of participation in women's organizations is less clear, as is the degree to which women policymakers influence women-friendly policy compared to their male counterparts. ***Nevertheless, it is clear that when women are at the policymaking table, the conversation changes.***

II. “Women-Friendly” Policy

It is difficult to define the concept of women-friendly policy without risking controversy.⁶ Some allegedly women-friendly policies are perceived as liberal, while others are considered conservative or faith-based. Marian Lief Palley, professor of political science at the University of Delaware, cautions us not to assume that women hold uniform views on all political issues and also not to view women as a single force in politics and policy. Even though “...women reflect as broad a spectrum of views as do men...”⁷, it seems that – irrespective of political affiliation – they push for both the promulgation of at least some women-friendly policies and support of female candidates, at all levels of government, whom they view as stewards of those policies.

Towards A Universal Definition

In 1995, the United Nations-sponsored Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, defining women-friendly policy, was adopted by the United States and 188 other nations. These policies included those which “help prevent violence against women, promote women’s economic equality, alleviate poverty among women, improve their physical, mental, and reproductive health and well-being, and enhance their political power.”⁸

Under these newly accepted guidelines, in 2000, the IWPR created a Women’s Resources and Rights Checklist of state policies that can be used to both advance and measure women’s status in the United States. These policies fall under several categories: protection from violence, access to income support (including welfare and child support), women-friendly employment protections, and legislation protecting sexual minorities and reproductive rights.⁹ In other words, women-friendly policies are those that work to prevent violence against women, support female economic and political equality and protect women’s health.

*Taking into account the presence or absence of women-friendly policies as defined by the Women’s Resources and Rights Checklist within American states, and comparing Tennessee’s results to all other states, Tennessee ranks an embarrassing last place.*¹⁰

Table 3. State Ranks and Composite Scores for Women’s Rights and Resources Checklist, 2000

RANK	STATE	SCORE
1	Hawaii	26.99
2	Vermont	23.63
3	Washington	23.48
4	California	23.47
5	Alaska	22.73
6	New Jersey	21.43
7	Connecticut	21.27
8	Massachusetts	20.99
9	New York	20.42
10	Illinois	19.88
11	Rhode Island	19.67
12	New Mexico	19.66
13	Maryland	19.22
14	Iowa	18.74
15	New Hampshire	18.33
16	Minnesota	18.01
17	Oregon	17.75
18	Nevada	17.69
19	Wisconsin	16.21
20	Pennsylvania	15.64
21	West Virginia	15.42
22	Maine	15.23
23	Texas	14.87
24	Wyoming	13.73
25	Missouri	13.64
26	Kentucky	13.63
27	Montana	13.52
28	Ohio	13.18
29	Utah	12.59
30	Colorado	12.57
31	Delaware	11.89
32	Nebraska	11.54
33	Oklahoma	11.36
34	Arkansas	11.25
35	Florida	10.91
36	Georgia	10.61
37	Kansas	10.41
37	Michigan	10.41
39	South Carolina	10.22
40	Louisiana	10.21
41	Arizona	9.95
42	South Dakota	9.90
43	North Carolina	9.44
44	Alabama	8.84
45	Virginia	8.44
46	North Dakota	8.42
47	Indiana	8.05
48	Idaho	7.48
49	Mississippi	6.58
50	Tennessee	6.35

Source: IWPR’s 2000 report on
The Status of Women in the States.

III. The Tennessee Story

An Historic Perspective

It was in July of 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton's nephew climbed through a church window in Seneca Falls, New York to unlock the door that the minister had somehow forgotten to leave open, permitting the first women's rights convention to get under way. Seven decades later, in August of 1920, by a one vote margin, 26-year-old Tennessee Representative Harry Burn made his home state the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment, giving the legislation the necessary three-fourths support needed for ratification.¹¹ A little over a week later, with the signature of Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, the amendment was officially added to the constitution proclaiming that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”¹² This guaranteed not only a woman’s right to vote but paved the way for women to run for and win political positions at the local, state, and national level. ***It took seventy-two years for women’s suffrage to pass following the first women’s rights convention.***

Tennessee Women in Elected Office - Historical Summary¹³

Statewide Elective Executives

United States Congress

Marsha Blackburn (R)	U.S. Representative	2003 - Present
Jane Eskind (D)	Public Service Commission	1981-1986
Marilyn Lloyd (D)	U.S. Representative	1975 - 1995
Irene B. Baker (R) *	U.S. Representative	1964 - 1965
Louise G. Reece (R)*	U.S. Representative	1961 - 1963
Willa McCord Blake Eslick (D)*	U.S. Representative	1932-1933

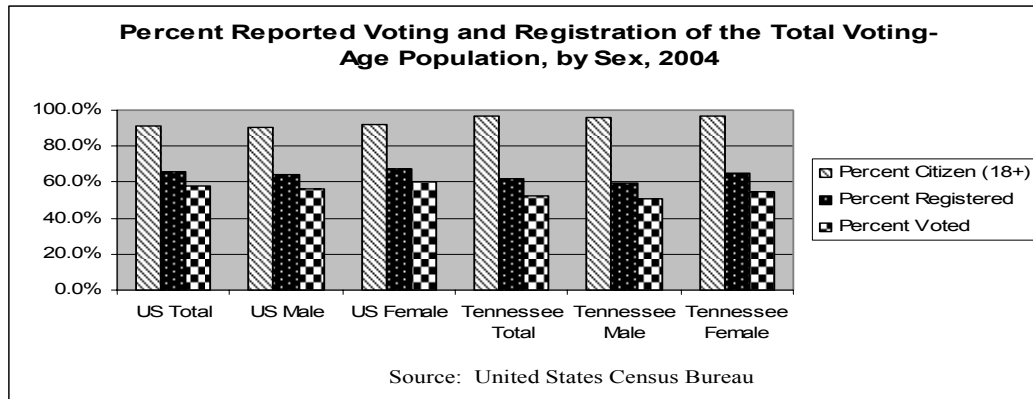
* Won a special election to fill a vacancy caused by the death of her husband

While some Tennessee women have taken advantage of women’s suffrage, their numbers compare poorly to both men and women in most other states. ***Indeed, even though female political representation has been gradually on the rise, Tennessee has seen only a three percent increase over the last fourteen years.***¹⁴ “Despite national trends and an increasing homogeny in national culture fostered by the mass media and education, southern states are not as likely to elect women to public offices as are eastern and western states.”¹⁵ Further, when viewing the southern states, ***Tennessee ranks as having the lowest voter participation rates compared to all other American states.***¹⁶

In the most recent study conducted on the status of women in Tennessee by the IWPR, Tennessee had a national composite political participation ranking of 49th (of 51, including the District of Columbia). Even among other southern states that lagged in these rankings, Tennessee remained one of the lowest ranked states, as follows:¹⁷

- 36th in the nation for women’s voter registration (1998 and 2000)
- 42nd for women’s voter turnout (1998 and 2000)
- 41st for women in elected office (2004)
- 31st for women’s institutional resources (2004)

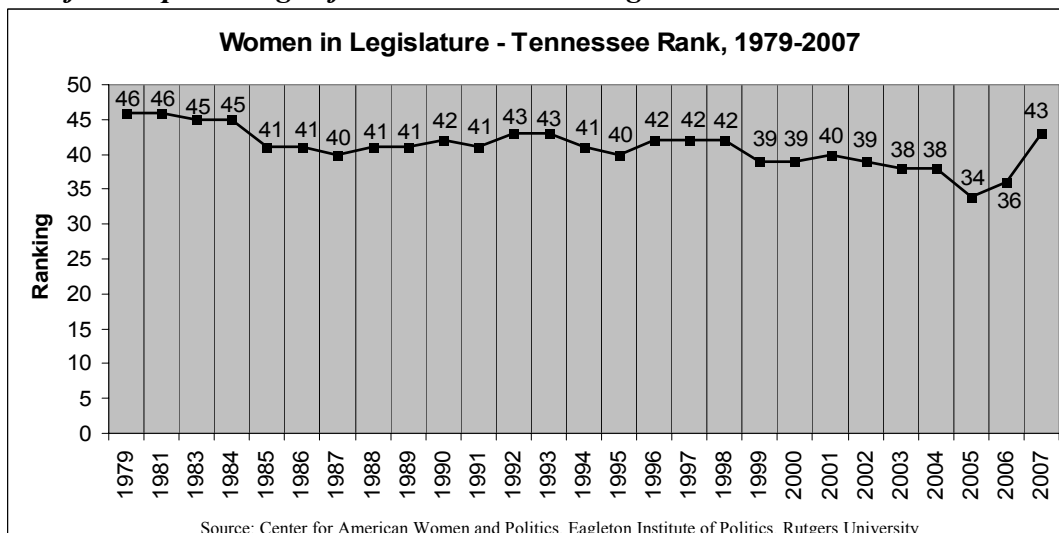
Voting



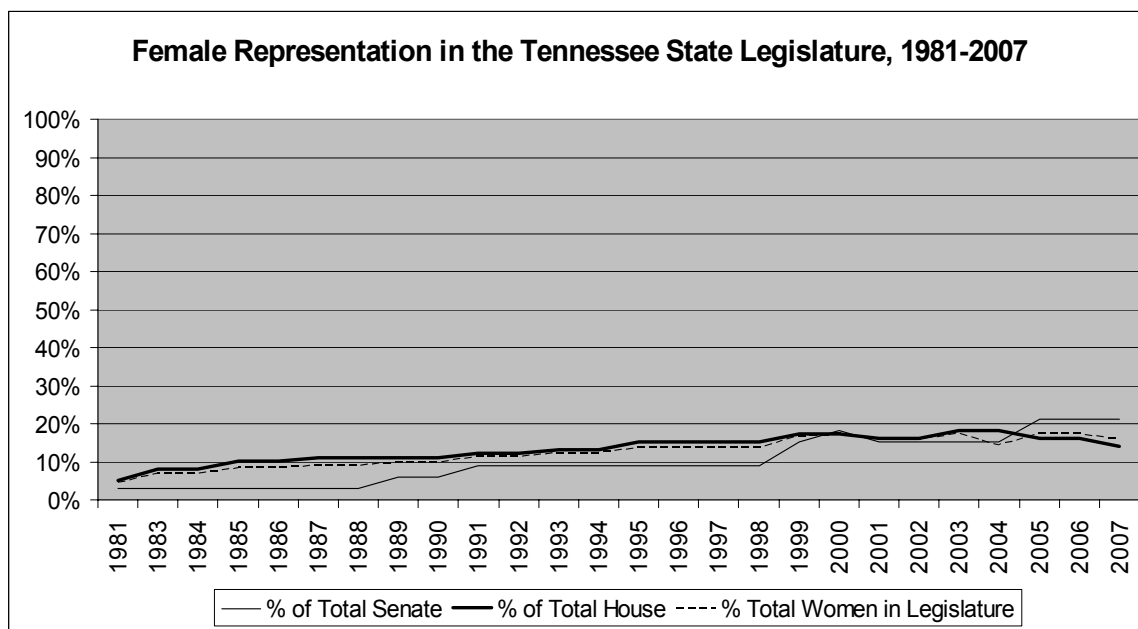
Recent census data indicate that both American and Tennessee women register and vote for presidential elections at higher rates than men.¹⁸ Nationally, “in every presidential election since 1980, the proportion of eligible female adults who voted has exceeded the proportion of eligible male adults who voted.”¹⁹ In addition, “the number of female voters has exceeded the number of male voters in every presidential election since 1964.”²⁰ Women are more likely to register to vote than men in every state except Pennsylvania and are more likely to vote than men in all but seven states: Hawaii, Kentucky, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota.²¹

Governance

While American women do vote at higher rates than men, they remain under-represented in elected state and federal government offices. Women’s obvious political interest shown by their increased registration and voting tendencies evidently does not lead women to take the important political step of pursuing a political career. In 2007, eight out of the thirty-two state senators in Tennessee were women and thirteen out of the ninety-nine state representatives were women. *Tennessee currently ranks 43rd in the nation for the percentage of women in the state legislature.*²²

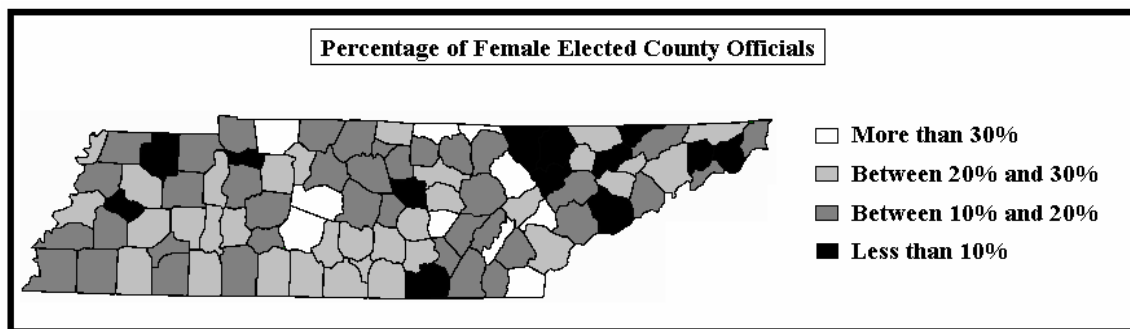
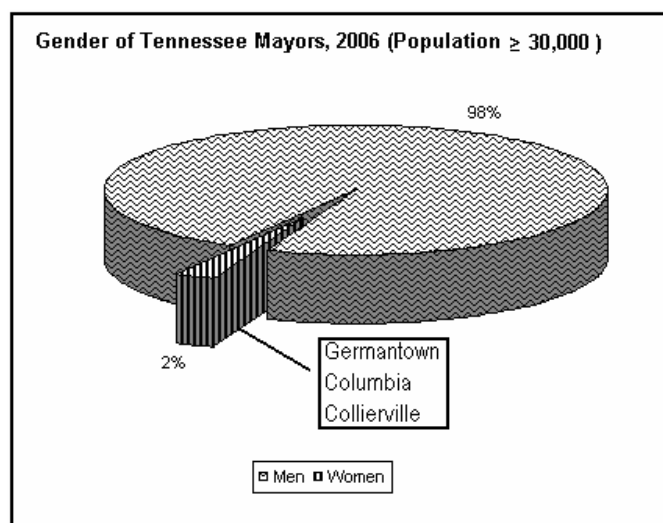


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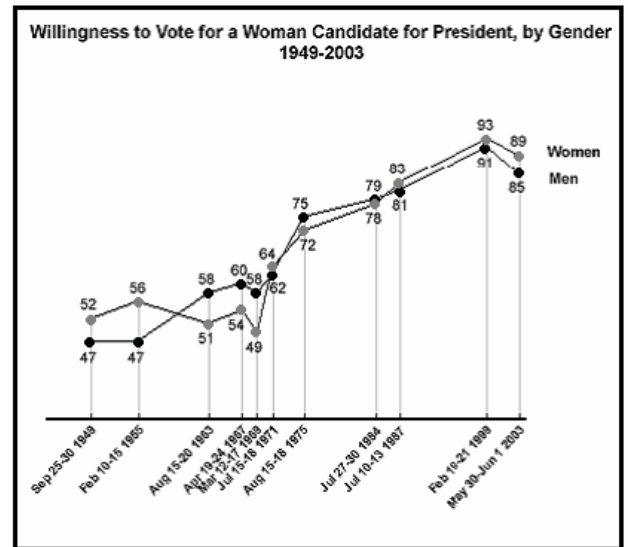
In 2007, of Tennessee's 347 cities and towns, only 22 had female mayors (Algood, Bethel Springs, Blaine, Collierville, Crump, Decherd, Dover, Fayetteville, Gallatin, Galloway, Germantown, Gruetli-Laager, Jamestown, Louisville, Lynchburg, Moscow, Mt. Juliet, Niota, Nolensville, Norris, Obion and Saulsbury).²⁴ In addition, *since its establishment in 1796, Tennessee has yet to elect a single female governor or senator, and has only elected five females to the United States House of Representatives, three of whom were elected under special circumstances resulting by the death of their husbands.*²⁵ This is in contrast to

the 390 males elected. Furthermore, only two females have ever won Tennessee state-wide elections, both selected to the public service commission.²⁶ Today, not a single Tennessee county can boast parity for elected county officials.

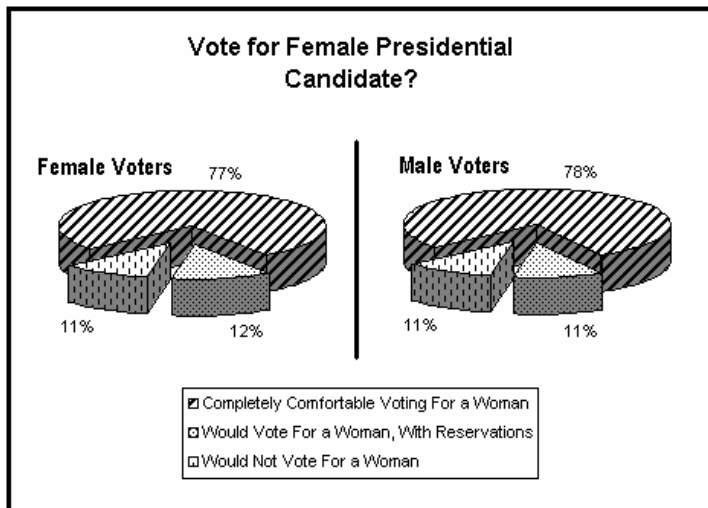


Nationally, Tennessee is presently represented by only one woman in the United States Congress: Representative Marsha Blackburn [R] from Tennessee's 7th congressional district. Gallup polls suggest that a majority of Americans, both male and female, would vote for a female presidential candidate - should she be qualified - though some respondents who claimed willingness also said that in the privacy of the polling station they might have a change of heart.

This trend began to accelerate in the 1960s, due perhaps to women's rights movements which gained momentum at the time.²⁷ It would seem then that given the fact that folks allegedly would vote for them, there would be an increased number of women running for the highest offices. This unfortunately has not been the case.



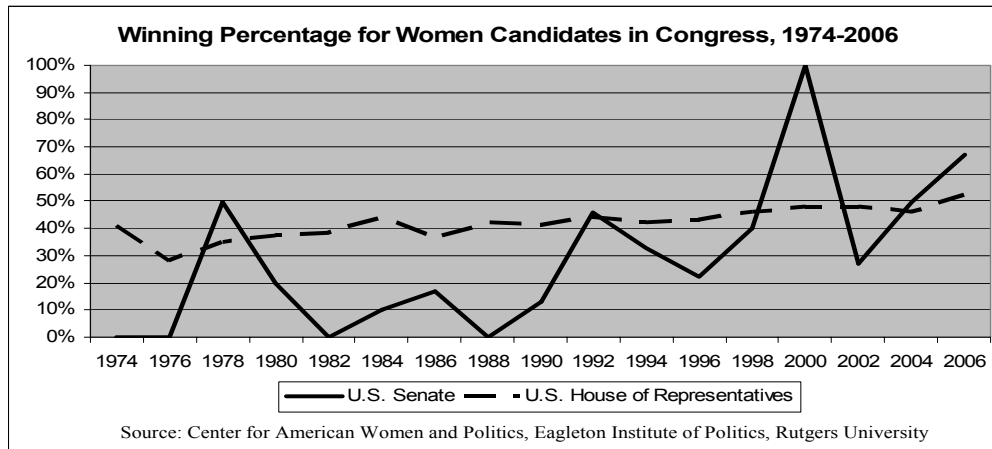
Source: Gallup Poll News Service



Source: Gallup Poll News Service, Feb./Mar. 2007

In addition to the scarcity of women candidates, those who choose to run lose at higher rates than men. Since polls suggest that most American voters today would feel comfortable selecting a woman for the highest political office in the nation, it would seem that voters would be equally comfortable selecting women for congressional positions. While congressional election results show improved rates of female victory over the past thirty years, when women ran for congressional office, more lost than won, with few exceptions.²⁸ While

this observation cannot definitively be blamed on sexism, certainly it must be a factor. It is unlikely that in every election lost by women, they were the lesser qualified candidates.



IV. Factors Influencing Women's Political Inclusion and Participation

Since today more American women are running for political positions than ever before, their universal political participation is still far from equivalent to that of men's participation. Many theories exist regarding the barriers that prevent women from reaching the various levels of political office, much less voting at all. Some place blame on the political system, while others blame societal-based gender prejudices. Whatever the reasons, the barriers appear stronger in Tennessee as well as the other southeastern states, while they are less significant in many northeastern and western states.²⁹ The lack of pervasive female candidacy engenders an unrepresentative democratic system which, at all levels, fails sufficiently to sponsor women-friendly legislation. *Indeed, it appears that the institutions best equipped to promulgate and support policy designed to make positive change for women, do not include within their ranks, a representative number of women to speak to the matter.*

To understand why Tennessee ranks low compared to other states in terms of women's political participation, the factors impacting female political participation nationwide must be explored. Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon explain that there are four theories which give explanation to women's slow integration into politics.³⁰

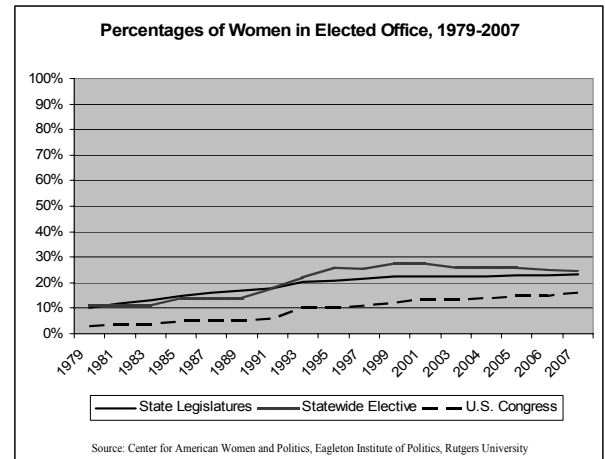
The Political System as a Pipeline

The first theory argues that the American political system is a pipeline. "In the American electoral arena, there is a hierarchy of political offices that serves as a career ladder for elected officials. Politicians begin their careers serving in local and state offices before running for Congress. Thus, once women begin serving in these lower political offices in great numbers, only then will we see serious increases in the number of women serving in the House, and eventually in the Senate."³¹ Women will attain higher level political office once they reach a "critical mass" in any given area where they are serving. In other words, the low number of women in the state legislature prevents them from reaching higher level government positions. *For Tennessee to successfully send female*

representatives to Congress, it must begin by taking measures to increase the number of women participating in its state legislature.

The Perceived Social Role of Women

The second theory, and perhaps the strongest of the four, argues that women fail to achieve full political participation due to “a nearly universal, societal attitude that has valued women principally as mothers and wives.”³² This socialization has given women the dual responsibility of caring for the welfare of the household in addition to any other professional or political aspirations. For many women combining these tasks is unrealistic. In a recent USA Today article, Stephanie Coontz, professor of history and family studies at Evergreen State College in Olympia Washington is quoted as stating that recent findings from research done at George Mason University support what she has learned from studying oral histories of married couples for 30 years, “the very word ‘marriage’ is so deeply associated with the idea that it involves men having to do less housework”.³³ A report from the *Journal of Family Issues* from a self reported survey reflects that in the United States, 70.6% of housework in a marriage is done by women, and 37.3% done by men.³⁴ Tennessee Democratic Chairman Gray Sasser explains that “there is still a natural inclination to think that women share more of the burden at home, be it with children or the household chores, the kind of traditional role.”³⁵

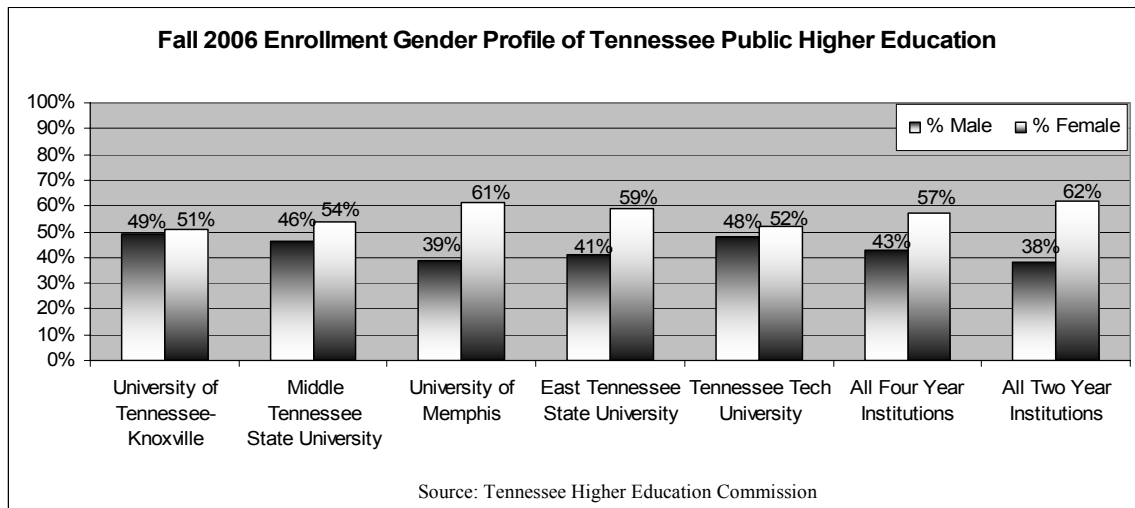


A woman’s expected role, however, is not the only factor that leads to a male-controlled political system. Rather “it does not help that politics has traditionally been a man’s world, and that many men – and some women – want to keep it that way. A woman may be considered ‘too soft’ for political leadership – or ‘unfeminine’ if she runs.”³⁶ These societal expectations of women’s and men’s roles prevent most women from seeking political positions and thus inhibit them from lobbying for their own interests. Wendy Pitts Reeves, a County Commissioner in rural East Tennessee pointed out that “we [Southern women] are taught not to put ourselves first... to be helpers and supporters, to be the number two person but not the number one person.”³⁷ She also said that, “at least here in my experience, there are a lot of people who don’t know what to do with an outspoken woman. There are a lot of people who are really threatened by it.”³⁸ Marnie S. Shaul clarifies this by explaining that “some women may find it difficult to appreciate and support women candidates and officials because women in politics have selected a role different from the traditional one.”³⁹

The Impact of Education

The next theory is that lower female political representation may come as a result of an unequal higher education system. In the largest five state universities in Tennessee, women constitute a higher percentage of the student population than do men. While this is true, the path taken by women while in college does necessarily lead them toward a

career in politics. Law and business, for example, are typical precursors to political office yet women remain overwhelmingly underrepresented in both fields.⁴⁰ Of the 132 members of the 2007 Tennessee legislature, fifty-six, or 42% had careers in law or business. The female under-representation in these professions prevents many of them from attaining many of the essential skills necessary for political entry and success. Additionally, pursuing a career in law or business, for many women, is excessively time consuming given that “women have the double burden of political commitment and major family responsibilities.”⁴¹



Note: No Tennessee state four-year or two-year institution enrolls more men than women. Of all Tennessee state four-year institutions the University of Tennessee- Knoxville has the highest percentage of male students (49%) and Tennessee State University has the highest percentage of female students (66%). Of all Tennessee state two-year institutions Northeast State Technical Community College and Pellissippi State Technical Community College have the highest percentages of male students (46%) and Dyersburg State Community College has the highest percentage of female students (71%).⁴²

The Realities of Social Roles

Add to the educational demands, the realities of social roles, and the picture becomes more complex. When asked if the political world required equal demands of both men and of women, the consensus of the officeholders interviewed by the Economic Council on Women was affirmative. The time and skills demanded are equivalent; however the societal demands differ. Robin Smith, Tennessee Republican Party Chairman, points out that “as a woman is moving forward and making roads in the political scene, being heard, being seen, making statements on issues, the demands on a woman’s time, particularly and most importantly if she has a family, are more strenuous than those on many men.”⁴³

The Level of Political Acumen

Finally, women simply are less informed about political issues than their male counterparts due to household expectations of them which require more responsibility and less leisure time. Anna Greenberg, of *Greenberg Quinlan Rosner*, a research and consulting firm in Washington D.C., explains that “when men get home from work, they sit down and watch the news. When women get home from work, they make dinner.”⁴⁴ This generalization has a ring of truth that may help explain in part the lack of political acumen among women – and it may even help explain why many women do not even

consider running for political office or even voting. “We still very much depend on our spouses to help us make our political decisions” explains Tennessee State Representative Brenda Gilmore. “I talk with my husband about politics but I make my own decision.”⁴⁵

On a more optimistic note, as pointed out by Robin Smith, with recent technological improvements, women have been able to learn more about politics through mediums such as the internet and 24-hour news services who offer news access to busy women that results in political education.⁴⁶

The Effect of Mindset

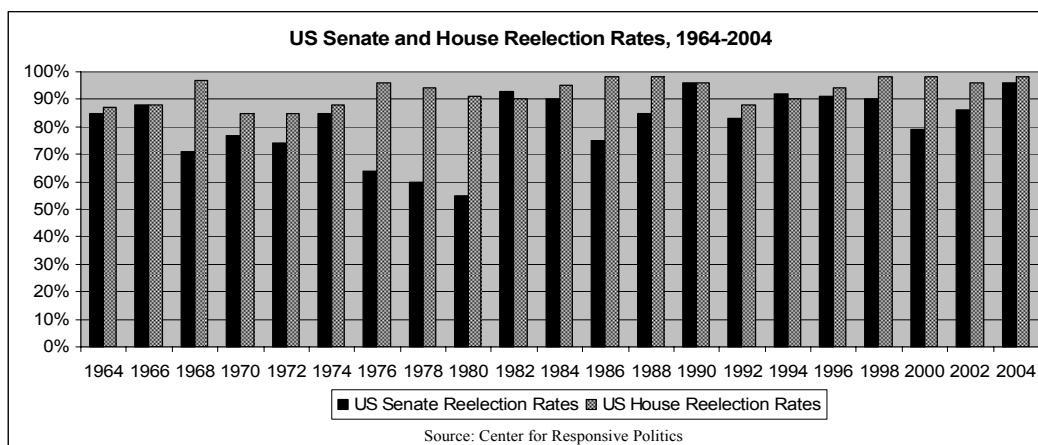
No matter what factors influence entry, for women to become part of the political system in comparable numbers to men, both men and women must overcome the perceived gender roles that do not square with that concept of an equally-gendered government. And that challenge directly relates to mind-set. The research of Richard Lawless and Jennifer Fox found that when men and women who shared similar personal and professional credentials were asked about their political ambition, men consistently expressed higher levels of interest.⁴⁷ The position comes as a result of women not feeling that the political route is even an option for them, and the gender-expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy – as evidenced by the enormous power of the concept of incumbency.

Question: Have you ever thought about running for office?		
	Women	Men
Yes, I have seriously considered it.	10%	19%
Yes, it has crossed my mind.	33%	40%
No, I have never thought about it.	57%	41%

Lawless and Fox (2005), Table 3.2, p. 44 (excerpt)

The Power of Incumbency

Since its creation, and without fail, Congress has been dominated by men, who have had “substantial advantages when they run for reelection, such as name recognition and the use of franking (mailing) privilege.”⁴⁸ Incumbents, therefore, are able to “outspend their challengers at a rate of three to one.”⁴⁹ As a result, it becomes exceedingly difficult for women to compete against men who have already been in office and who choose to run for reelection. This reality makes the entry of new female representatives into Congress more difficult.



The Influence of Competitiveness

The fourth theory, and one that comes in part as a result of the power of incumbency, is a widespread lack of competitiveness.⁵⁰ The lack of significant numbers of women in political offices today can, to some extent, be credited to the high rates of reelection among incumbents which result in low rates of women who decide to compete in seemingly unwinnable political races. This is not the only factor, however.

“Bochel and Denver stress supply-side factors for the dearth of women politicians:” the low number of women in the political scene is not exclusively because women are not being elected, rather “if more women came forward to pursue a parliamentary career, the study suggests, more would be nominated.”⁵¹ The reaction to the lack of female candidacy, according to Gilda Morales of the *Center for American Women and Politics* at Rutgers University, has been that political groups are “actually going in and trying to not only support but train women as candidates.”⁵² By actively pushing women to become political, many groups feel that they will be able to “bring different perspectives to the political debate, draw disenchanted voters to the polls and widen the pool of female candidates.”⁵³

In interviews conducted by the TECW, with Tennesseans involved in politics, interviewees cited family influence in introducing them to politics. “As long as I can remember, we talked about issues; whether or not it was about politics, it was always about government,” recalls Tennessee Republican Party Chairman Smith.⁵⁴ “I’ve kind of grown up in a political family and always been active and involved... I’ve always been around politics and believe in what can be accomplished through the system,” says Tennessee Democratic Party Chair Gray Sasser.⁵⁵

While growing up in a political family greatly increases the likelihood of political interest, most are not that fortunate. Interviewees cited a specific occasion when they were asked to become politically involved that led to their eventual engagement in politics. It was encouragement that led them to political office. Without it, some researchers suggest, many female officeholders would not have ever considered political careers. This, of course, differs from the male experience.

Sandra Bennett, former President of Greater Nashville Business and Professional Women, described her entrance into politics as beginning with a telephone call to Representative Mike Turner to check on the status of his Equal Pay Bill. In response, he asked her to call the Governor’s Office. “Talk about being thrown into the deep end of the pool... that’s how I got involved,” remembers Ms. Bennett.⁵⁶ That first call resulted in two very intense years of working with Representative Turner for the passage of the Equal Pay Remedies and Enforcement Act. Today she serves as the Vice-President of Legislation for both the Nashville and the Tennessee Women’s Political Caucus.

Some women cite role models and mentors as their reason for political entry. Wendy Pitts Reeves cites meeting women serving in government at the Stennis Center’s Southern Women in Public Service Conference as key in breaking down the barriers to her running for office. “It was reading the nametags of the people near me and talking during the breaks and finding that they were no different than I was,” says Reeves.⁵⁷ Representative Gresham also points out the importance of role models in her experience.

“We always look to our mothers for modeling for how I should be, who I should be and what I should do... For women to be involved in politics, the culture you grow up in is extremely important.”⁵⁸

All things considered, each of the four theories gives some explanation for the low numbers of women who seek political positions, which in turn leads to an even greater lack of competitiveness. Rather than having incentives to help increase female participation in politics, women face numerous disincentives that prevent them from equally participating in the governance process. ***To correct these problems, it appears that change must begin at the local level and work its way to the top.***

V. The Impact of Women’s Organizations on Political Participation

Women’s organizations, such as the National Organization for Women, EMILY’s List and WISH List, advocate for women-friendly legislation through educating their members, contacting their local leaders and employing professional lobbyists to work intensively on their behalf. The effect of their collective efforts is impressive. An example of the successful lobbying efforts by a women’s organization was seen in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, finally passed by the United States Congress in 1994 after four years of lobbying which allocated \$1.6 billion for violence prevention and services.⁵⁹

Lobbying, however, is not the only method used by women’s organizations to achieve equality. These organizations have diverse goals and a variety of means by which to accomplish them. Some, for example, are affiliated with political action committees that actually endorse candidates. Other organizations, for example Business and Professional Women USA, create foundations which sponsor research and education. Some women’s organizations have been able to achieve success by using the court system to fight in support of women-friendly legislations as in the first sex discrimination case appealed under Title VII in 1969 by National Organization for Women attorney Sylvia Roberts.⁶⁰

Susan J. Carroll in 2001 conducted research through telephone interviews by sampling 228 female state senators, 228 male state senators, 474 female state representatives, and 474 male state representatives and found that women legislators who belonged to a women’s organization were much more likely to be involved with “women’s rights legislation.”⁶¹

“Most women legislators are involved with women’s organizations both external and internal to the legislature. Majorities or near-majorities of women legislators belong to women’s organizations outside legislature, donate money to women’s organizations, and receive support from women’s organizations when they run for office. Most also meet with other women in their legislature whether on a formal or informal, partisan or bipartisan, basis. A sizeable majority of women legislators have close connections to feminist groups, in particular. They belong to organizations such as the National Organization for Women and the Women’s Political Caucus, and they receive support from these groups when they campaign for office.”⁶²

Carroll's research concludes that while at times inconsistent, "it is the women who are involved with women's organizations who are most active in advocating on behalf of women in their legislative work."⁶³ Furthermore, "in most cases women who are connected to women's organizations are more likely than other women to work on legislation aimed at helping women. Moreover, those women legislators who have multiple types of connections to women's organizations and thus are most closely connected are especially likely to be working on women's rights bills."⁶⁴

The reasons for these findings, Carroll asserts, is that "women's organizations seem to function as an important linkage mechanism in representation, connecting women officeholders to other women and to a more collective vision of women's interests, thus providing at least a weak form of accountability."⁶⁵ On the contrary, "in the absence of close ties to women's organizations, it seems likely that few women legislators would be active advocates on behalf of women."⁶⁶ Women's organizations help women overcome and resist the "pressures toward assimilation and conformity" usually seen in "male-dominated institutions" such as the legislator. They "provide affirmation and sustenance for women legislators; they also function as a conscience for these women, providing subtle, and perhaps sometimes not so subtle, reminders that they have a responsibility to represent women's interests within the institution in which they serve."⁶⁷

In Tennessee, organizations such as Women in Numbers, the Nashville Women's Political Caucus, the Memphis Women's Political Caucus, the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus and the League of Women Voters serve as ideal examples of the effect of women's organizations on the political process. Women in Numbers (WIN), was founded in 1992, after Anita Hill testified in front of an all male committee during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. The bi-partisan organization's mission is to provide a network of financial support and training to help qualified women win state and local office. To date, over 75 female candidates have been endorsed by WIN and over \$250,000 have been contributed, collectively, to their campaigns. Financial support for, and by, women is essential to the success of their impact on the political process. Women feel passionate about issues that affect families. As women, we wonder why we don't have national health care, and why we don't have child care as a top issue on the table. It is because we are not voting with our purses as much as men do. Men look at making political contributions as part of doing business. Candidates are going to spend time with and listen to people who fund them, and too often, women are not at those tables.

The Nashville Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), founded in 1972, hired its first lobbyist to represent women on Capitol Hill in 1985. In 1992, the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus (TWPC) was formed and has as its mission to promote full and equal participation of women in government and political parties. The TWPC then hired the lobbyist to represent Tennessee women statewide. The TWPC encourages women to seek public office, whether elected or appointed. Importantly, the TWPC has been a vocal force in lobbying for women-friendly legislation and its work was vital in the passage of several legislative measures relating to education, health-care, insurance coverage and equal pay. Significant to this Council, the TWPC and League of Women

Voters drafted and lobbied legislation through the General Assembly in 1998, creating the Tennessee Women's Economic Council. A list of legislation for which the NWPC and the TWPC successfully lobbied can be found in Appendix 1.

VI. The Impact of Women as Policy-Makers

Though political ideology plays a role in the kinds of bills a policymaker sponsors, conservative women are as likely as progressive men to sponsor women-friendly legislation. And that effect is multiplied by factors such as the presence of a women's caucus, the percent of women serving in the legislature, and interactions with external women's organizations. Carroll's study found that feminist men and non-feminist women are equally

likely to report having worked on at least one bill aimed at helping women. "When feminist issues are broadly defined, the female non-feminists are just as likely as male feminists to engage in efforts aimed at helping women consistent with feminist policy goals." ⁶⁸ Carroll's study found that the female Democrats, liberals, self-identified feminists, and African-Americans were most likely to act for women's rights legislation. However, the same study found that female Republicans, moderates or conservatives, non-feminists, and whites are more likely to work for women's rights legislation than their male counterparts. ⁶⁹ Nevertheless, as seen below, Democratic women are more likely to actively advocate women's issue proposals than Republican women. ⁷⁰ This is due, perhaps, to traditionally Republican stances taken on women's reproductive rights as well as legislations related to the protection of sexual minorities.

For women policymakers to be able effectively to support women-friendly legislation, they must become part of mainstream, and not act as tokens. This factor and the existence of a women's legislative caucus are the two most important factors that affect the impact women legislators have on women-friendly, according to Thomas and Welch. ⁷¹ "Of the top five states in the production of women's and family legislation, four had formally organized women's caucuses. Indeed they were the only states with such caucuses. The other state among the top five, Washington, was the state with the largest proportion of women members." ⁷² Carroll's survey of state senators and representatives found that with a caucus of women legislators, women are significantly more likely to work on a women's rights bill.

Another factor affecting the impact of a woman policymaker on women is her ability to interact with the external women's organizations. Carroll's study, found that "creating and maintaining ties between women legislators and other women and women's groups, inside and outside the legislature, may be one of the strongest ways to ensure that women legislators are agents of change who act for women." ⁷³

104th Congress: Feminist, Social Welfare, and Anti-Feminist Bill Sponsorship by Party and Gender								
Issue Type	Democratic Men (N=165)		Democratic Women (N=31)		Republican Men (N=217)		Republican Women (N=17)	
	Percent Sponsoring Bills	Number of Bills	Percent Sponsoring Bills	Number of Bills	Percent Sponsoring Bills	Number of Bills	Percent Sponsoring Bills	Number of Bills
Feminist	19%	39	65%	70	11%	43	35%	23
Social Welfare	44%	133	52%	41	36%	146	59%	31
Anti-Fem.	1%	1	0%	0	12%	40	12%	3

Source : Transforming the Political Agenda? Gender Differences in Bill Sponsorship on Women's Issues

Carroll's research, as summarized below, suggests that women policymakers, regardless of their political affiliation, have a profound impact on the passage of women-friendly legislation. Women were significantly more likely than men to focus on a female-related bill as their top legislative priority.⁷⁴ In the same study, Carroll found that about 10% of female legislators made legislation focusing on women's rights their top priority (domestic violence, childcare, equal rights, abortion, teen pregnancy and parental leave were among the issues covered) while only around 4% of male legislators acted in the same way. Women gave top priority to legislation that focused on healthcare above all other areas of legislation. 64.4% of women state senators worked on a women's rights bill while only 38.8% of their male colleagues reciprocated. 57.1% of women state representatives worked on a women's rights bill while 35.9% of male representatives had done so.⁷⁵

Karen O'Connor, Director of the *Women and Politics Institute* at the American University in Washington, D.C., asserts that the presence of women in legislative bodies makes a significant difference not only in what gets discussed, but also in what kinds of legislation are advanced.⁷⁶ In *Do Women in Local, State, and National Legislative Bodies Matter? A Definitive Yes Proves Three Decades of Research*, O'Connor synthesizes the research done by political scientists on the impact of woman legislators at the state and local level. She divided their research into the categories of how women act on the issues, work for their constituents, and act in the legislative body.⁷⁷

On the Issues:

- Women conceptualize problems differently and are more likely to offer new solutions.
- Non-feminist women are more likely than non-feminist male colleagues to work on legislation affecting women.
- Women legislators of both parties are more likely to advance "women's issues," define women's issues more broadly than men, put them at the top of their legislative agendas, and to take a leadership role in those issue areas. This results in bills dealing with children, education, and health care becoming legislative priorities.
- Women are more likely to view crime as a societal, rather than individual, problem.
- Women legislators are more likely to make certain that their policy positions are translated into new programs to help women.

Working for Their Constituents:

- Women legislators receive more constituent casework requests than their male colleagues and are three times more likely to agree that they would do more if they had more staff.
- Women not only are more responsive to constituent requests, they are more likely to be persistent in their follow through to get a favorable resolution for their constituents.

- Women legislators believe that they need to help other women transcend barriers to success.

In the Legislative Body:

- Women view themselves as more prepared, more diligent, and more organized.
- Women emphasize a “hands on” approach emphasizing collegiality and collaboration instead of a hierarchical “command” approach.
- Women rely on a wider range of individuals in formulating policy creating more sensitive and thoughtful policy making.
- Women who meet as a caucus are more likely to work on bills dealing with women’s rights.
- First term women sponsor less legislation than their male counterparts, while more senior women offer more than their male counterparts.
- Women committee chairs use their positions to facilitate interaction among committee members rather than to control and direct the debate. This affects the behavior of witnesses and other committee members.
- In general, women-sponsored legislation has a slightly higher rate of passage. Particularly, women’s priority bills on women’s issues become law at a higher pass rate than men’s.
- When women are less than fifteen percent of the legislative body, their status constrains their behavior.
- States with the lowest percentage of women in their legislatures pass the lowest number of women’s bills. Men believe that women in the legislative body help sensitize them to women’s issues.

VII. Rethinking the Status of Women in Tennessee

Research by Amy Caiazza in 2002, suggests that the lower instance of women-friendly policy – that, in turn, directly affects their economic status - is related to lower representation by women in state legislatures.⁷⁸ Tennessee’s disappointing rankings for women at all levels prompted the Council to take a closer look at whether or not such is true for Tennessee.

In 2005, the TECW completed a study of the economic status of women, ranking each of Tennessee’s 95 counties in terms of (1) women’s annual earnings, (2) the earnings gender gap, (3) the female labor force participation rate, (4) the female unemployment rate and (5) the percent of women in managerial or professional occupations.”⁷⁹ Based on the results of Caiazza’s research, the expectation was that counties with the best economic conditions would have the highest percentages of female elected officials whereas the counties with the worst conditions for women would have the fewest numbers of females in elected office. Such was not the case. The results indicated little correlation, possibly explained by the fact that the rankings do not take into account that women and men tend to hold specific elected positions which hold different powers: Women are more likely to hold appointed or functionary positions, such as county clerk, clerk and master, circuit

court clerk, or register of deeds, while men are more likely to hold elected policy-making positions such as mayor or commissioner. Also, the many counties in which the economic conditions for females are not good, may be the beneficiary of legislation not geared to women's equality, rather than that of lower female representation.

In sum, having more women in political positions today may ultimately bring improvement, but not necessarily immediately. To see whether or not today's higher female representation on the county level may be a precursor of increased economic equality for women, further research is indicated.

The 2007 Survey: A Beginning...

In 2006, the TECW took on as part of its Program of Work, the project of examining the reasons why women are not active participants in the political process. Respondents to a test survey came randomly from a combination of a TECW blast e-mail, participants at a diversity job marketplace and attendees at an economic mini-summit. The results, though not to the exacting level of scientific research, indicate that, in order of importance, women are most influenced in their political participation by:

- Involvement in Civic Organizations
- Family
- Friends/Co-workers
- Involvement in their Religious Community
- Teachers

The factors, in order of importance, that affect their level of participation in the political process are:

- The time available to them for political activity
- Their interest in the matter at hand
- Their perceived qualifications for political participation
- Trust of the political process
- Information about the matter at hand

The majority of those responding were female and Caucasian, with above average education and income. Most were registered to vote and voted regularly in local and national elections. It is interesting to note that women are concerned about being qualified to run for office. Men seldom believe they are not qualified to run.

Obviously, more research needs to be done in this area – with a random sample that more likely represents the universal female population of Tennessee. However, it would seem that civic organizations play an important role in connecting women to politics and that their participation is driven by the twin factors of time [related to social role] and interest [related to subject matter], as tempered by their perceived importance to the process.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

In 1996 Tennessee was ranked 39th nationally for number of female legislative representatives. Tennessee dropped to 43rd nationally. On the aggregate level, women's presence in the legislatures and other state-level elected offices seems closely associated with better policy for women. It follows, then, that for women in both parties, an increase in the number of female representatives at all levels of government would be a push for women-friendly legislation across the board. Further, in states where women's political status is strong, their economic status is as strong as well. Tennessee, unfortunately, follows this pattern – conversely - in that there is both weak political and economic status for women.

Women in Tennessee are neither receiving - nor advocating for - their equitable political representation at the local, state, or national level. Parity at the national level depends on equality at the state level and equality at the state level depends on equality at the local level. For improvements to reach the top, they must begin at the bottom. It is the responsibility of the government who, by neglect, has promoted historic unequal participation, to affirmatively repair its mistakes. However women also must take the initiative and an active role in increasing their own participation in government. With government's help, and with the collective will and actions of women, improvements can be made. The following recommendations are offered for the reader's consideration:

1. GOVERNMENT POLICY SHOULD:

- ***Encourage equal participation at all levels of education.*** Girls should not be programmed into traditional female studies that lead to low-paid occupations. Rather they should be given more opportunities to pursue careers which lead to political office, for example economics, law and political science.
- ***Discourage sex-role stereotyping.*** Government should promote changes in the way women are treated in textbooks, movies and television. Women should not only be portrayed as housewives, mothers, teachers or nurses, but also as successful business professionals with high income levels.
- ***Change the demographics of upper-level state political participation to reflect equity.*** The government should pursue a policy of increased appointment of qualified women to cabinets, boards and judicial posts.
- ***Fund and support high level and grassroots women's groups who work for the economic interests of women.*** This policy, in turn, will aid to ameliorate the economic challenges to the state budget.
- ***Provide grants*** or other funding to sponsor bi-partisan partnerships to research and report on women's issues, including the effect of legislation.

2. WOMEN SHOULD:

- ***Obtain better education and job training*** that provides more direct routes to political involvement.
- ***Build networks*** that increase access to information and reduce isolation.

- *Work to improve the image of women* by monitoring textbooks and media portrayals.
- *Register to vote – and regularly vote* for the candidates and issues of their choice.
- *Form women’s groups* for lobbying activities, skills development and support of candidates. (See Appendix 2 for a case example.)
- *Work within political party structures* to support women candidates and men who are sensitive to women’s concerns.
- *Develop fundraising skills and their own resource base* with which to support their candidates.
- *Develop mentor relationships* with those holding positions of influence in parties or governments.
- *Believe in their ability to be a successful public servant.*

With the combination of government and women working together to promote equal political opportunity for women, improvement is inevitable. Unfortunately, this union has yet to form in affirmative fashion. It is for the benefit of the country as a whole for local and state governments to begin pushing for such actions so that women can move up the “pipeline” – not only to represent their constituencies but also to become an active part of the policy promulgation that engenders their own economic health.

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APPENDICES

1. Nashville and Tennessee Women's Political Caucus Legislative Highlights

2007

Child Custody and Support – Worked successfully to help pass legislation that would prohibit courts from determining that a parent who is partially or completely unemployed in order to care for a child under six years of age is willfully or voluntarily unemployed or underemployed for the purpose of determining child support. Determination of the income of that parent shall not be attributed any income other than income the parent actually earned during the time period being considered by the court in determining the income of each parent. Full bill is expected to be passed into law in 2008.

Victim's Rights – Payment of Forensic Sexual Assault Examinations – Worked successfully to pass legislation that authorizes payment of costs for forensic sexual assault examinations (for the purpose of gathering evidence of sexual assault) from the Victim's Compensation Fund for sexual assault victims and establishes a "Sexual Assault Examination Fund" to reimburse victims for these expenses that are not compensable under the victim's compensation fund.

Mandatory Joint Custody – Worked successfully to defeat two separate pieces of legislation filed for mandatory joint custody. This legislation would take away the discretion of judges to make child custody decisions based on the best interest of each individual child. This legislation would presume that all children of divorce should automatically be placed in a mandatory joint custody situation. We fully believe that each case of child custody should be looked at separately and a ruling made which will be most beneficial to that child.

2006

Mandatory Joint Custody – Worked successfully to defeat this legislation in the House which would have required courts to divide physical and legal custody equally between parents. It would have taken discretion away from judges where the well-being of children were concerned.

Health Insurance Continuance – Passed legislation which will require a covered spouse to give a 30 day notice to a dependent spouse before insurance coverage can be cancelled. Included authority for the judge in a divorce case to penalize the spouse, who dropped coverage without notice, by requiring that spouse to provide a health care policy for the non-insured spouse.

Breastfeeding Bill – Worked successfully to pass legislation giving women the legal right to breastfeed an infant in any place, public or private.

Constitutional Protection – Continued to play a major role in defeating legislation that would have taken away the privacy rights of women under our state constitution.

2005

Child Support Study Committee – Drafted and obtained passage of legislation requiring Department of Human Services to have study committee formulate child support guidelines which are fair to both parents, simple to apply, and which provide adequate support for children.

Spousal Rape – Worked successfully in concert with Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence to obtain funding for and passage of legislation to make the penalty for rape of a spouse the same as for rape of a non-spouse.

Custody – Worked successfully to keep legislation which would have required courts to divide physical and legal custody of children equally between both parents in most cases from advancing in the House. This will continue to be an issue in 2006.

2004

Mandatory Joint Custody – Played a major role in defeating proposed legislation which would have created a presumption of equal physical and legal custody of children. As a result, courts continue to retain discretion to order parenting arrangements in the best interests of children.

Constitutional Protection – Played a major role in defeating a resolution which would have reduced the privacy protection of women under our state constitution.

Lottery Funds for Early Childhood Education – Advocated for earmarking excess lottery funds for early childhood education.

Spousal Rape – Continued to work for funding of spousal rape legislation.

Continuation of Health Insurance – Continued to work in coalition with other groups on legislation for continuation of health insurance for spouses after divorce, or death of a spouse.

2003

Fairness in Alimony – Drafted and obtained passage of legislation stating that it is the public policy of Tennessee to support and encourage marriage and to consider economic detriment a spouse suffers for the benefit of the marriage as a factor in determining alimony at the time of a divorce. Further, the court is directed to consider the standard of living during the marriage in setting alimony.

Spousal Rape – Continued to work for funding of spousal rape legislation

Constitutional Protection – Continued to work in coalition with other groups to prevent progress of a Resolution which reduces the privacy protection of women under our state constitution.

Continuation of Health Insurance – Continued to work in coalition with other groups on legislation for Continuation of health insurance for spouses after divorce, or death of a spouse.

2002

Spousal Rape – Continued to work for funding of spousal rape legislation.

Constitutional Protections – Worked in coalition with other groups to prevent progress in the House of a resolution which reduces the privacy protection of women under our state constitution.

Continuation of Health Insurance – Worked in coalition with other groups on legislation to obtain continued health insurance for spouses after divorce.

Custody – Helped defeat an effort to remove judicial discretion in custody cases.

Home and Community Based Healthcare Services – Successfully passed funding for services.

2001

Home and Community Based Healthcare – Actively worked and passed legislation creating Home and Community Based Healthcare Services.

Spousal Rape – Drafted and lobbied through judiciary committees a bill to bring spouses under the protection of the general rape law.

2000

Economic Coalition for Children – Put together a coalition of organizations from across the state, interested in the economic well-being of children, to alert and activate them concerning numerous pieces of legislation detrimental to children's economic interest.

1999

Victims' Protection Act – Drafted and passed legislation that provides for an individual with a court order of protection regarding domestic violence to request that public utilities and government agencies keep records pertaining to their residence and location confidential.

1998

Tennessee Economic Council on Women – Drafted and passed legislation to establish the Tennessee Economic Council on Women. The council will address the economic concerns and needs of women, including but not limited to, employment policies and practices, educational needs and opportunities, childcare, property rights, healthcare, domestic relations, and the impact of federal and state laws.

1997

Domestic Abuse Victims Protection Act – Drafted and passed bill broadening the protection offered by Orders of Protection to include minors in the definition of victim, and to provide protection for adults or minors who are dating or who have dated or who have or have had a sexual relationship.

1996

Domestic Violence Victims Health Insurance Protection Act – Drafted and passed bill prohibiting health insurers from denying coverage or refusing to pay benefits to victims of domestic violence if the denial is based on the applicant's status as an abuse victim.

1995

Domestic Violence Act – Drafted and passed bill creating Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council for the purpose of designing a domestic violence training course and curriculum for law enforcement and judicial personnel. The law requires continuing education in dealing with domestic violence cases.

1994

Fairness in Appointments Act – Drafted and passed bill providing for alternating appointments of women to the Tennessee Board of Education, Board of Regents, UT Board Trustees and Tennessee Higher Education Commission until membership on these board reflects the proportion of men and women in the population generally.

Reproductive Freedom – Continued annual effort in concert with other organizations to resist further restriction on reproductive rights.

1993

Sexual Harassment Act – Passed bill defining sexual harassment and requiring that notice of the law be mailed to all employers in the state. The law also provides that workshops to prevent sexual harassment be made available to all state employees. Further, it creates workplace policies governing employee conduct on the issue.

1992

Open Appointments Act – Drafted and passed bill requiring Secretary of State to publish annually a directory of board and commissions and to publish monthly a listing of vacancies.

1991

Homemaker Protection Act – Drafted and passed bill to insure that during the course of divorce, homemaker's contribution would be considered equally with contribution of wage earner in division of marital assets.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions – Drafted and passed a resolution calling for gender and racial balance in future appointments to state boards and commissions.

Reproductive Freedom – Joined with other organizations to support protection of reproductive rights for all women.

1990

Dropout Prevention Act – Drafted and passed bill in cooperation with League of Women Voters and obtained \$600,000 in funding to establish school based child care centers for teen parents in the ten counties with the highest teen pregnancy rates.

1989

Tennessee Child Care Facilities Loan Guarantee Corp – Drafted and passed bill to establish Tennessee Child Care Facilities Loan Guarantee Corp. Obtained \$1,000,000 in funding to guarantee loans for the startup and expansion of child care facilities.

1988

Maternity Leave – Drafted and passed bill to preserve the law by making it apply to pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing an infant, when applicable.

Homemaker Protection Marital Property Act – Drafted and passed bill to reverse a law which created a presumption against equal division of marital property.

Marital Property – Drafted and passed bill to insure that the marital estate includes property acquired up to the divorce hearing date and is not cut off as of the separation or filing date, and to make parties accountable for property dissipated in anticipation of filing or between filing and the hearing date.

Alimony – Defeated a bill which would have made the rehabilitation alimony law apply retroactively to every divorce decree ever rendered.

Child Custody – Defeated the amendment of a bill that appeared to instruct judges to order mothers and fathers to contribute equally to a child's support regardless of disparity in earnings.

1987

Maternity Leave -- Drafted and passed bill to give women up to four months unpaid maternity leave and allow them to return to their jobs without loss of benefits or seniority.

Child Custody – Successfully amended unacceptable bill resulting in acceptable legislation.

1986

Shelter Services – Drafted and passed bill to provide shelter services to unmarried victims and their children.

Family Life Curriculum – Helped persuade the State Board of Education to drop requirement for public hearings before implementation of the Family Life Curriculum.

Health Insurance – Drafted and passed bill to improve availability of health insurance for divorced and widowed spouses and dependent children of group policyholders.

Protective Orders – Drafted and passed bill to clarify court jurisdiction to issue protective orders.

1985

Child Sexual Abuse – Joined with others to successfully lobby passage of comprehensive child abuse legislation.

Child Support Enforcement – Worked with sponsors to draft, amend and successfully pass vital legislation to help insure the payment of child support.

1984

Shelter Funding – Played large role in achieving legislation to fund shelter services for child abuse and domestic violence victims.

Standard of Need – Helped secure increased medical and other benefits for poor women, children and families through support of AFDC Standard of Need Legislation.

1983

Family Law Act – Drafted and passed comprehensive family law legislation which provided for economic recognition of homemaker's role as contribution to acquisition of assets of marriage, recognition of pension benefits as marital property, and more equitable distribution of property, alimony and child support.

1982

Equality Legislation – Drafted and passed bill to revise discriminatory laws to make them apply equally to both genders.

2. A Case in Point: The WHEN Story

Background: Pittsfield, MA is a town of about 41,000 people. It is led by a mayoral form of government with a mayor and eleven City Councilors. According to an article in the Berkshire Eagle, “the City Council was run by 11 men, and meetings had become the butt of jokes, infamous for bickering and occasional calls to the police to control outbursts.” The televised council meetings became a source of entertainment for the city.

At a Memorial Day picnic, two sisters-in-law were talking about the status of their City Council and decided to find a woman who would serve on the Council and whom they could help campaign. They contacted a group of women to discuss ways in which they could support women who wanted to run for city government. Thirty women met in a living room and they identified three female candidates who would run for City Council offices.

Three candidates were identified. With WHEN’s help, all three were elected to the City Council in the next election.

How to form a WHEN organization:

1. Organize the group. Pittsfield’s WHEN began with 30 members and grew to 280 active volunteers. It is led by a steering committee and the only officer in the organization, required by law, is the treasurer.
2. Identify your mission. The Pittsfield group sought intelligent, forward-thinking women who would bring civility and responsibility to their City Council. The group does not take a position on specific issues or endorse candidates because of their beliefs. They only support female candidates.
3. Ask specific women to run for office. Work within the group to identify women to run and approach those identified. Research consistently shows that women are less likely to throw their hat in the ring without being asked. Women are also more likely to think of themselves as under-qualified to serve in public office.
4. Establish unorthodox support systems. Because of campaign finance laws, the organization could only give \$500 in financial support. However, members supported their candidates in other, equally important, ways. WHEN volunteers cooked dinners for candidates, transported children to sporting events and lessons, wrote letters and cards seeking support and thanking supporters, and hosted fundraisers.
5. Remain engaged. Many of the volunteers remain involved through their e-mail network which keeps them interested and engaged. After the initial elections, members moderated debates, joined neighborhood associations, conducted an educational forum on city government, registered voters for future elections, and supported newly elected representatives.

3. Resources

LOCAL

Chattanooga Women's Political Caucus

Memphis Women's Political Caucus

Nashville Women's Political Caucus

P. O. Box 25211

Nashville, Tennessee 37202

(p) 615-664-3382

Email: nwpc@nashvillewpc.com

STATE

League of Women Voters of Tennessee

P.O. Box 158369

Nashville TN 37215-8369

615/297-7134

www.LWV-TN.org

Tennessee Department of State

Division of Elections

312 8th Ave. North

9th Floor, Snodgrass Tower

Nashville, TN 37243

Phone: (615) 741-7956

Tennessee Democratic Party

223 Eighth Ave. No., Suite 200

Nashville, TN 37203

Phone: 615-327-9779

www.tndp.org

Tennessee Republican Party

2424 21st Avenue, Suite 200

Nashville, Tennessee 37212

(615) 269-4260

www.tngop.org

Tennessee Women's Political Caucus

405 Westland Drive

Lebanon, TN 37087

NATIONAL

American Association of University Women
1111 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(p) 800-832-AAUW
E-mail: helpline@aauw.org
www.aauw.org

Center for American Women and Politics
Eagleton Institute of Politics
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
191 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8557
(p) 732-932-9384
(f) 732-932-0014
www.cawp.rutgers.edu

Democratic National Committee
430 S. Capitol St. SE
Washington, DC 20003
(p) 202-863-8000
www.democrats.org

Institute for Women's Policy Research
1707 L Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20036
(p) 202-785-5100
www.iwpr.org

League of Women Voters
1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000,
Washington, DC 20036-4508
(p) 202-429-1965
(f) 202-429-0854
www.lwv.org

National Foundation for Women Legislators
910 16th Street, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20006
(p) 202-293-3040
(f) 202-293-5430
www.womenlegislators.org

National Women's Political Caucus
P.O. Box 50476
Washington, DC 20091
(p) 202-785-1100
(f) 202-370-6306
www.nwpc.org

Republican National Committee
310 First Street, SE
Washington, D.C. 20003
(p) 202-863-8500
www.gop.org

The White House Project
434 West 33rd Street, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(p) 212-261-4400
(f) 212-904-1296
www.thewhitehouseproject.org

Women and Politics Institute
American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Ward 237
Washington, D.C. 20016
(p) 202-885-2903
(f) 202-885-1305
Email: wandp@american.edu
wandp.american.edu/index.php

Women in Numbers
P.O. Box 330668
Nashville, TN 37203
(p) 615-662-4946
Email: info@wintennessee.com
wintennessee.com

WEB RESOURCES

State of Tennessee (<http://www.tennesseeanytime.gov>)
Tennessee State Legislature (<http://www.legislature.state.tn.us>)
Tennessee Economic Council on Women (<http://www.state.tn.us/sos/ecw/>)